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DESTINATION ALAMEIN

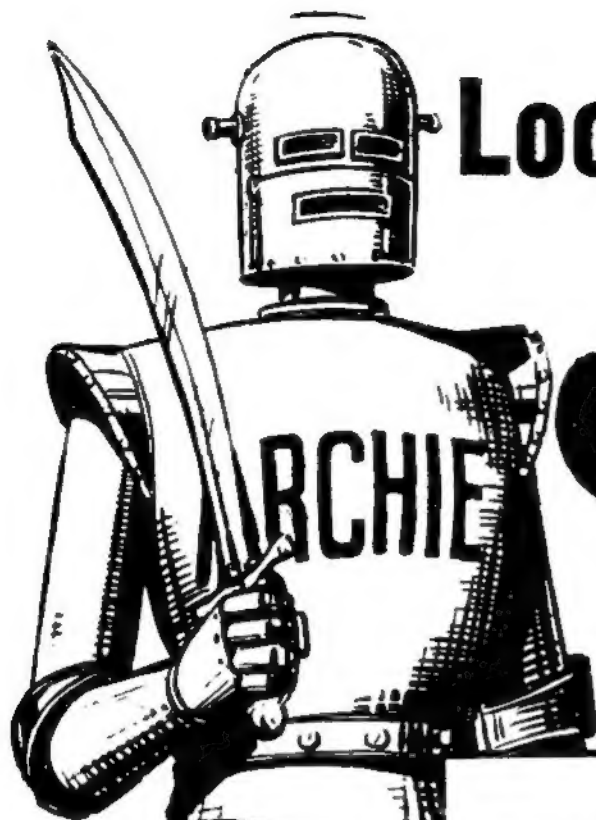


DESTINATION ALAMEIN

IN JUNE 1942, THE GERMANS SUDDENLY LAUNCHED AN ALL OUT ATTACK AGAINST THE EIGHTH ARMY FRONT AT EL AGHEILA. AFTER TEN DAYS OF BITTER FIGHTING, THE REINFORCED AND STRENGTHENED AFRIKA KORPS SMASHED THROUGH. BADLY MAULED, HOPELESSLY OUTNUMBERED, THE BRITISH DESERT ARMY BEAT A DISORDERLY RETREAT.



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FIVE STAR WEEKLY

*Chapter 1.***STRANDED**

IN ITS WAKE, THE RETREATING ARMY LEFT GROUPS OF MEN STRANDED HUNDREDS OF MILES INSIDE ENEMY TERRITORY. SOME FOUGHT UNTIL WIPED OUT. OTHERS, NUMBED AND BATTLE-SHOCKED, WAITED LISTLESSLY FOR CAPTURE. BUT THERE WERE ALSO MEN WHO SOUGHT TO PENETRATE ROMMEL'S LINES AND REJOIN THEIR REGIMENTS. THIS IS THE STORY OF FOUR SUCH MEN-- WHOSE DESTINATION WAS EL ALAMEIN!



ON THE HORIZON, THREE BLACK DOTS SHIMMERED IN THE REFLECTED HEAT RAYS. SERGEANT CALVERT FROWNEED AS HE LOWERED HIS FIELD GLASSES. THE SUN GLARE WAS TOO FIERCE AND THE DISTANCE STILL TOO GREAT TO IDENTIFY THE DOTS.



FORCING HIMSELF NOT TO REVEAL HIS TENSE ANXIETY TO THE OTHERS, CALVERT HANDED OVER THE FIELD-GLASSES TO FLEMING AND WENT TO SEE HOW THE DRIVER WAS PROGRESSING ...

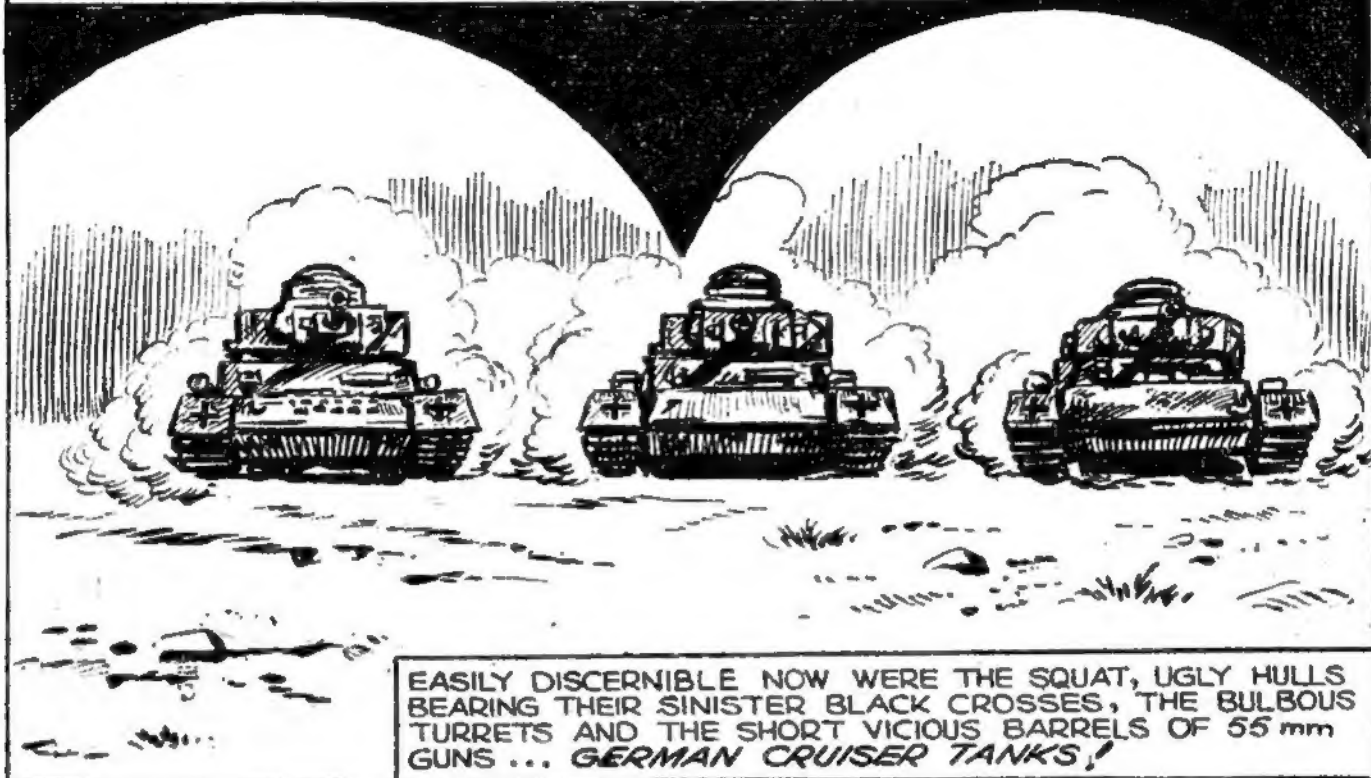


CALVERT'S FACE TIGHTENED AT THE AGGRESSIVE NOTE IN THE OTHER MAN'S VOICE. EVER SINCE EASTMAN HAD JOINED CALVERT'S CREW, TEN DAYS AGO, THE DRIVER HAD MADE NO ATTEMPT TO DISGUISE HIS INTENSE, PUZZLING HATRED FOR HIS SERGEANT-COMMANDER. CALVERT WAS ABOUT TO MAKE AN ANGRY REPLY WHEN FLEMING SUDDENLY GAVE A STARTLED CRY ...



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HEART POUNDING, CALVERT RACED OVER AND TOOK THE FIELD-GLASSES FROM FLEMING'S TREMBLING HAND.

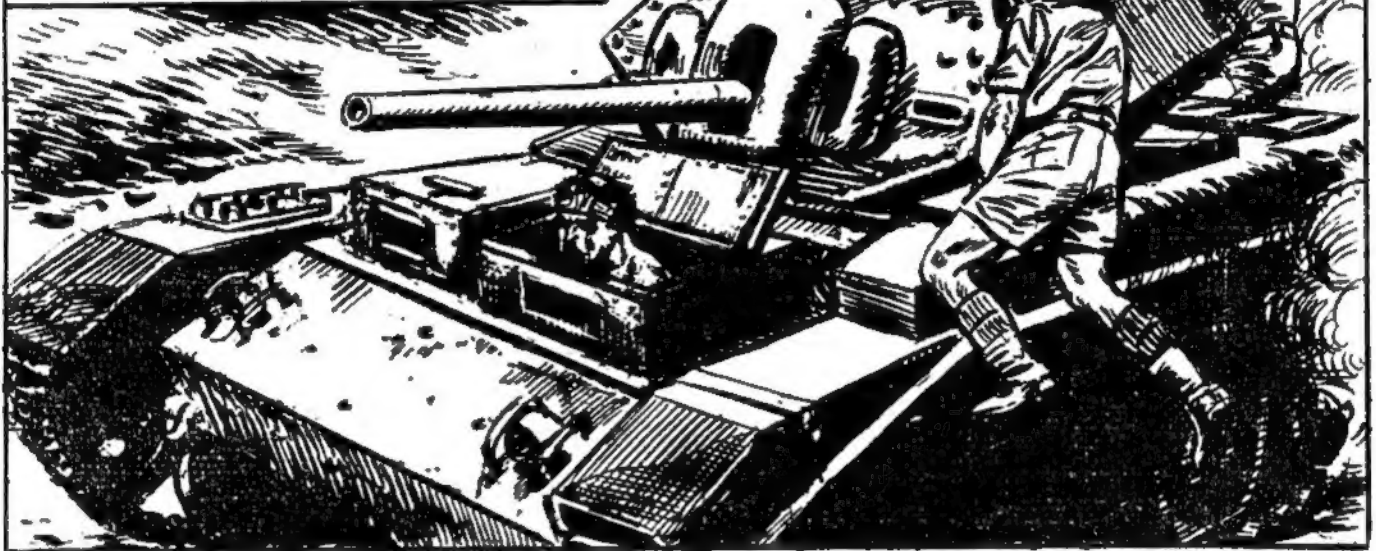


EASILY DISCERNIBLE NOW WERE THE SQUAT, UGLY HULLS BEARING THEIR SINISTER BLACK CROSSES, THE BULBOUS TURRETS AND THE SHORT VICIOUS BARRELS OF 55 mm GUNS ... *GERMAN CRUISER TANKS!*



WITH ANXIOUS EYES, THE CREW WATCHED EASTMAN UNSCREW, CLEAN AND REPLACE THE SECTION OF FUEL PIPING... THEN LEAP INTO THE DRIVING COMPARTMENT AND STAB AT THE STARTER BUTTON. WITH AGONISING SLOWNESS THE HUGE ENGINE TURNED OVER AND OVER, THEN BURST INTO ROARING LIFE!

RIGHT, EASTMAN, LET'S GET MOVING, WITH YOUR FOOT DOWN AS FAR AS IT WILL GO!



SMOKE BELCHING FROM ITS EXHAUSTS, THE CRUSADER LURCHED UP OUT OF THE WADI, THEN BEGAN TO PULL AWAY OVER THE FLAT GROUND TOWARDS THE EAST.

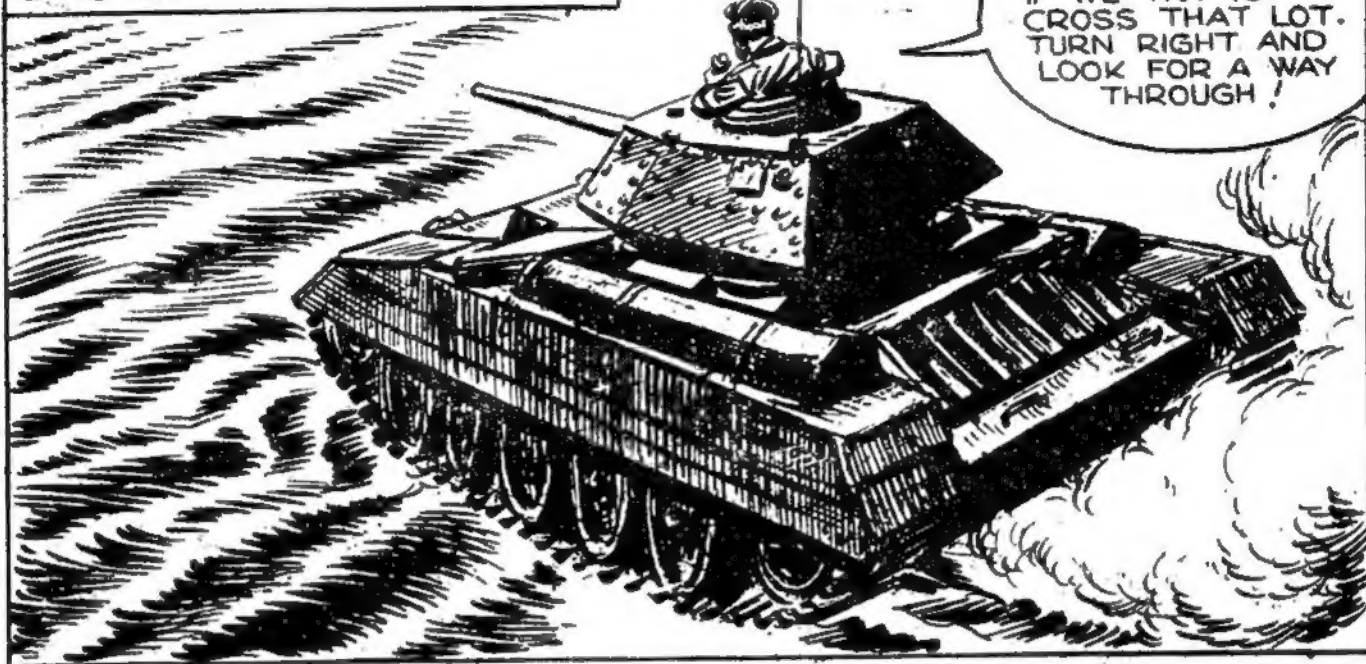
PHEW! THAT WAS A CLOSE CALL! IT'S LUCKY WE CAN OUTFRAN THOSE JERRY CRUISERS!



Destination Alamein

BUT SUDDENLY THE BRITISH TANK SLEWED SIDeways, ONE OF ITS TRACKS CHURNING FRANTICALLY! THEY HAD HIT A BELT OF SOFT SAND

SOFT SAND!
WE'LL BOG DOWN
IF WE TRY TO
CROSS THAT LOT.
TURN RIGHT AND
LOOK FOR A WAY
THROUGH!



YANKING AT THE RIGHT TILLER, EASTMAN SWUNG THE CRUSADER ROUND AND BEGAN TO RACE ALONG THE EDGE OF THE SOFT SAND BELT... THEN THERE CAME AN EARTH-SHAKING CRASH AS FLAME AND DUST FOUNTAINED INTO THE AIR, ONLY YARDS AWAY!

GUNNER, TRAVERSE RIGHT!
WHEN ON TARGET, FIRE! WE
CAN'T KNOCK OUT THOSE
JERRIES AT THIS RANGE,
BUT WE JUST MIGHT
SLOW THEM UP!



LIKE AN ANGRY TERRIER, THE CRUSADER SNAPPED BACK AT ITS PURSUERS. BUT ITS SMALL, TWENTY-FIVE POUNDER SHELL ONLY BOUNCED HARMLESSLY OFF THE TARGET!

THEY CANNOT HURT US WITH THEIR LITTLE POPGUN! SLOW DOWN SO AS NOT TO REDUCE THE RANGE... AND CONTINUE FIRING!



THE GERMAN GUNNERS INCREASED THEIR ACCURACY AND THE FLEEING CRUSADER BEGAN TO ROCK AND SHUDDER AS IT RAN ITS TERRIFYING GAUNTLET OF FIRE...



Destination Alamein

DESPERATELY, CALVERT SWUNG HIS PERISCOPE, FRANTICALLY SEEKING AN ESCAPE FROM ALMOST CERTAIN DESTRUCTION. *THEN...*

EASTMAN!
A *BREAK* IN THE
SAND! JUST PAST
THAT SCRUB!



THE CRUSADER SWUNG ON TO THE NARROW, ROCKY STRIP RUNNING THROUGH THE SOFT SAND, ITS SUPERIOR SPEED QUICKLY ENABLING IT TO DRAW AWAY FROM THE GERMAN TANKS...

WE'RE ON OUR WAY,
LADS. THOSE JERRY
MARK FOUR'S CARRY TOO
MUCH ARMOUR TO MATCH
OUR SPEED!



ALL THE REST OF THAT DAY THEY TRAVELLED WITHOUT PAUSE. THEN AS THE SKY BEGAN TO REDDEN, HERALDING NIGHTFALL, CALVERT CALLED A HALT.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE, SARGE? I SUPPOSE WE CONTINUE MOVING EAST?

NO, WE DON'T! NOT THE WAY I SEE IT!



WE'RE TOO SHORT OF FUEL TO MAKE IT RIGHT ACROSS THE DESERT, AND THAT WAY WE STAND ALMOST NO CHANCE OF GETTING MORE. I SAY WE HEAD NORTH TOWARDS THE COAST ROAD, AND THEN TURN EAST RUNNING PARALLEL WITH THE ROAD. THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF JERRY SUPPLY TRUCKS MOVING ALONG IT... AND WITH A GREAT DEAL OF LUCK WE CAN HI-JACK THE FUEL WE NEED.

THE OTHERS GASPED... CALVERT'S PLAN MEANT THEY WOULD BE TRAVELLING WHERE THE ENEMY WERE THICKEST. BUT THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY NO ALTERNATIVE!

YOU'RE... YOU'RE RIGHT, SARGE. BUT WE'LL HAVE TO KEEP OUT OF JERRY'S SIGHT. DO WE TRAVEL BY NIGHT?



NO! WE STAND TOO MUCH CHANCE OF STUMBLING ON THE ENEMY. MOVING BY DAY WE CAN KEEP A BETTER EYE OPEN. ONLY IF WE CAN SEE DANGER CAN WE TAKE STEPS TO AVOID IT!

Destination Alameln

NEXT DAY, THE SUN WAS STILL LOW IN THE EAST AS THE CRUSADER BEGAN ITS JOURNEY NORTH...

DON'T FORGET! IF ANY OF US EVEN *THINK* WE SEE AIRCRAFT WE STOP AND CLIMB INSIDE, *QUICK!* AND HOPE THE PILOT TAKES US FOR JUST ANOTHER KNOCKED-OUT DERFLICHT!



FOR FOUR HOURS, THROUGH SHIMMERING HEAT AND CHOKING DUST, THEY TRAVELLED WITHOUT INCIDENT. THEN FLEMING GAVE A FEAR-FILLED CRY OF ALARM

AIRCRAFT...TWO OF THEM! THEY WERE FLYING LOW OVER THOSE HILLS! I... I CAN'T SEE THEM NOW!

WE'LL PLAY IT SAFE. INSIDE... *QUICK!*



AS HE FOLLOWED FLEMING AND HARRIS INTO THE STIFLING, OILY HEAT OF THE TURRET, CALVERT YELLED OVER THE INTERCOM FOR EASTMAN TO STOP. SILENT AND MOTIONLESS, THE CRUSADER WAITED... THEN ITS CREW HEARD THE DRONE OF NEARING AIRCRAFT!

SEE THAT DUST, SCHODEL... I THINK THAT TANK HAS ONLY JUST STOPPED MOVING... AND THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT!



THE MESSERSCHMITT SCREAMED - TOWARDS THE BRITISH TANK, FLAME RIPPLING FROM ITS MACHINE-GUN PORTS ...



SHELLS CLANGED AGAINST THE STEEL TURRET, THE NOISE SO MAGNIFIED THAT THE MEN INSIDE THE CRUSADER FELT THEIR EARDRUMS WERE BURSTING ...



ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, EASTMAN HAD THE ENGINES GOING AGAIN. THE CRUSADER LURCHED INTO MOTION AS CALVERT FLUNG OPEN THE TURRET HATCH AND GRABBED AT THE BIG .5 BROWNING. AS HE DID SO, THE SECOND AIRCRAFT CAME HURLING IN...



IGNORING THE BULLETS AND SHELLS HOWLING ABOUT HIM, CALVERT SIGHTED THE BROWNING AND SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER... AND SAW HIS TRACER HAMMER INTO THE ONRUSHING MESSERSCHMITT!



THEN AGAIN, THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH LEAD AS THE OTHER AIRCRAFT BEGAN ITS SECOND ATTACK RUN... BUT THIS TIME ITS SHOTS HIT HOME!



Destination Alamein

THE CRUSADER'S ENGINE ABRUPTLY CUT DEAD. AS THE SICKENING STENCH OF BURNING RUBBER AND OIL FILLED THE INSIDE OF THE TANK, ITS CREW LEAPT FOR SAFETY.....



IN SPITE OF CALVERT'S WARNING, FLEMING HESITATED AS HE SAW THE MESSERSCHMITT SKIMMING THE GROUND TOWARDS HIM. THEN HE STARTED TO RUN... BUT IT WAS TOO LATE!



FOR WHAT SEEMED AN AGE, THE PILOT CONTINUED TO STRAFE THE HELPLESS BRITISHERS, BUT MIRACULOUSLY THERE WERE NO MORE CASUALTIES. AT LAST THE MESSERSCHMITT FLEW AWAY, ITS AMMUNITION SPENT!



HIS WOUNDS BANDAGED, FLEMING FELL INTO AN EXHAUSTED SLEEP...

WE CAN'T GO ON NOW. WE'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT FOR JERRY!

CUT THAT OUT, HARRIS! WE AGREED TO PUSH ON, AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE'RE DOING! WE'LL MAKE A STRETCHER FROM THAT BRUSHWOOD -- AND OUR SHIRTS!



HALF AN HOUR LATER, THEY WERE ON THE MOVE AGAIN, BEARING FLEMING, STILL UNCONSCIOUS, ON A CRUDE LITTER..

I'LL DO MY BIT, CALVERT, BUT WITHOUT WATER OR FOOD WE HAVEN'T A CHANCE OF GETTING THROUGH!



THE DAY WORE ON, THE SUN WAS A BURNING GLOBE SET IN A BRASSY SKY. ITS HEATWAVES BEAT DOWN RELENTLESSLY ON THE THREE MEN STUMBLING WEARILY THROUGH THE SAND. THEN...

NO MORE!
I...I CAN'T
GO ON!

GET UP,
HARRIS! YOU'RE
GOING ON!

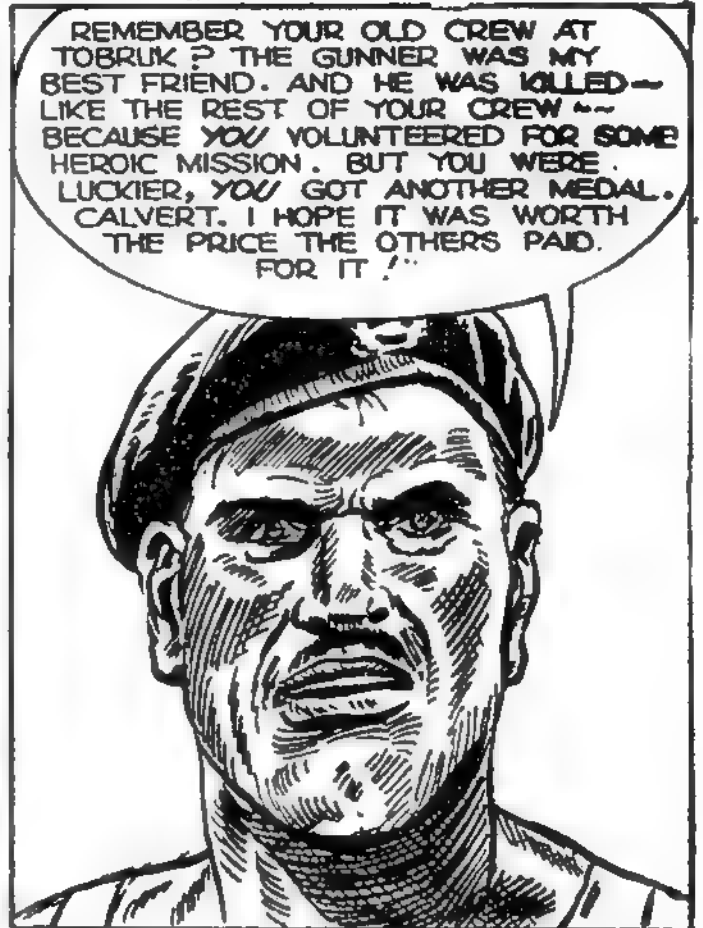
CAN'T YOU SEE
HE'S HAD IT,
CALVERT! HAVEN'T
YOU ANY PITY?

RELUCTANTLY, JACK CALVERT DECIDED TO HALT FOR A BRIEF REST. BUT HIS EYES WERE COLD WITH RAGE AS HE SWUNG ROUND TO EASTMAN...

YES, I'VE GOT PITY, EASTMAN, AND MORE EXPERIENCE OF THE DESERT THAN YOU. IF WE SIT HERE FOR LONG THE SUN WILL SAP AWAY OUR REMAINING STRENGTH. *WE'VE GOT TO KEEP MOVING... IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!*

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO GET BACK, CALVERT? WHY DON'T WE SET UP A SIGNAL FIRE SO THE GERMANS CAN COME AND PICK US UP. BUT THEN YOU WON'T BE A HERO, WILL YOU? LIKE YOU WERE THAT TIME AT TOBRUK!





JACK'S EYES WERE STEELY AS HE STARTED TO RAP OUT A REPLY. BUT HE WAS INTERRUPTED BY A SHOUT FROM HARRIS...



THE QUARREL FORGOTTEN, THE THREE MEN WHEELED AND GAPPED AT THE BATTERED JEEP COMING TOWARDS THEM ...

A JEEP!
IT'S ONE OF
OURS!

I DON'T
BELIEVE IT..
IT *CAN'T*
BE!

THE BULLET-RIDDLED JEEP STOPPED, AND A LEAN DUST-WHITENED MAN, WEARING AN AUSTRALIAN BUSH HAT, STEPPED FROM BEHIND THE WHEEL.

GOING MY WAY, MATES?
ALL POINTS CLEAR BACK TO
ALEX! NORTH'S THE NAME ...
'BLUEY' NORTH. AND MEET
ANNABELLE THE JEEP-- SHE'S
NOT MUCH TO LOOK AT, BUT
SHE'S A REAL GOER! WHAT'S
UP WITH YOUR COBBER
THERE?



BLUEY NORTH WHISTLED WHEN HE SAW FLEMING'S WOUND ...

THAT'S A BAD ONE!
WE GOT TO GET HIM TO
A DOC OR HE'S GOING
TO LOSE THAT LEG!

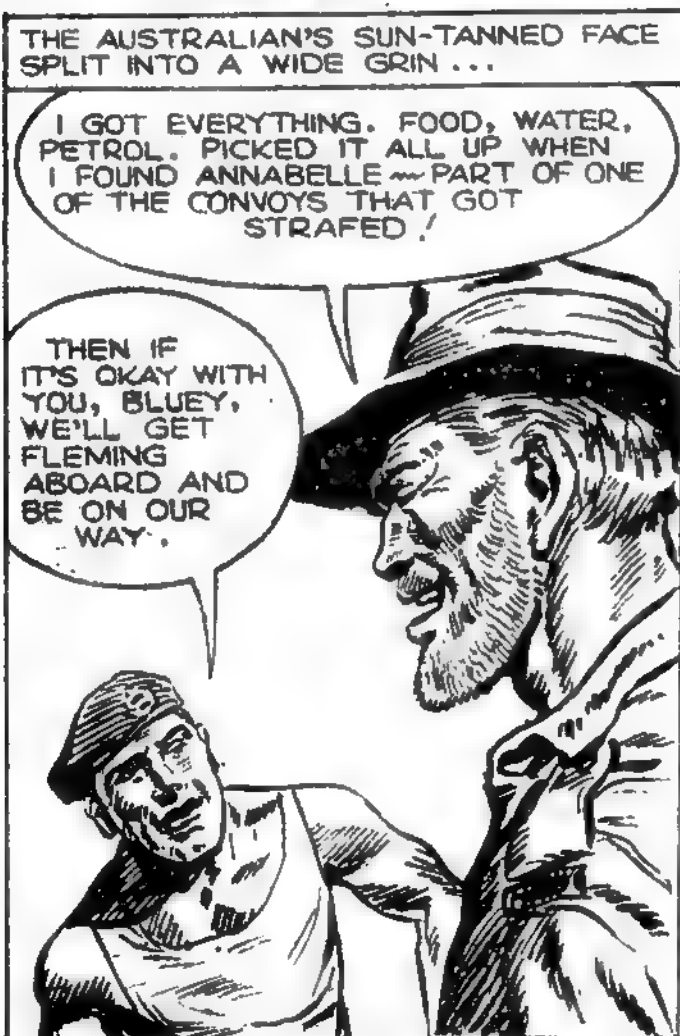
HOW ARE
YOU FOR FUEL
AND WATER?



THE AUSTRALIAN'S SUN-TANNED FACE
SPLIT INTO A WIDE GRIN ...

I GOT EVERYTHING. FOOD, WATER,
PETROL. PICKED IT ALL UP WHEN
I FOUND ANNABELLE ~ PART OF ONE
OF THE CONVOYS THAT GOT
STRAFED!

THEN IF
IT'S OKAY WITH
YOU, BLUEY,
WE'LL GET
FLEMING
ABOARD AND
BE ON OUR
WAY.



WITH FLEMING'S STRETCHER TIED
ACROSS THE BACK, THE JEEP
RESUMED ITS COURSE OVER THE
WASTELAND ...

WHICH WAY YOU
RECKONING ON
HEADING,
BLUEY?

SOUTH-EAST!
AIM TO HIT THE
OUTSKIRTS OF THE
SAND SEA THEN
MAKE FOR FARAFRA--
PROVIDING IT'S STILL
IN OUR HANDS!



Destination Alamein

FOR SOME TIME, THE AIR HAD BECOME MORE AND MORE OPPRESSIVE. SUDDENLY THERE CAME A FLURRY OF HOT, STINGING WIND. CALVERT TURNED ROUND AND SAW A DENSE BLACK CLOUD BROILING UP ABOVE THE HORIZON...



THE JEEP PICKED UP SPEED, BOUNCING OVER THE ROCK-STREWN GROUND. BUT ALWAYS THE OMINOUS BLACK CLOUD MOVED CLOSER...



BY THE TIME THEY HAD PARKED THE JEEP AND SPREAD A TARPAULIN TO FORM A SHELTER, THE FIRST WARNING WINDS HAD REACHED THEM.



THEN THE STORM WAS FULL UPON THEM. THE WORLD BECAME A SHRIEKING, AIRLESS INFERNO. THE TARPAULIN STRAINED AND REARED AGAINST THE ROPES THAT HELD IT... AND SAND BEGAN TO FILTER OVER THE FIVE MEN HUDDLED BETWEEN THE WHEELS OF THE SWAYING JEEP!



Chapter 2. THE MERCILESS DESERT

AT LAST, MANY HOURS LATER, THE CHOKING, SKIN-LASHING STORM PASSED ON.

WE'LL HAVE ANOTHER LOOK AT THAT LEG, FLEMING!

IT...IT HURTS WORSE THAN EVER, SARGE!

I JUST HOPE THAT FLIPPING SAND HASN'T GOT INTO THE ENGINE!



CAREFULLY, CALVERT PULLED AWAY THE FIELD DRESSING.

IS... IT... BAD?

WELL, IT'S NO BETTER, FLEMING! BUT WE'VE GOT BLUEY'S FIELD DRESSING. WE'LL PUT THAT ON.



THEY MADE THE WOUNDED GUNNER AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE, THEN CALVERT TOOK THE OTHERS ASIDE ...

THE WOUND'S BECOME BADLY INFECTED. THERE'S NOTHING MORE *WE* CAN DO ... HE NEEDS A DOCTOR!

TOO RIGHT! BUT THAT'S LIKE ASKING FOR THE MOON!



THERE'S ONLY ONE ANSWER. LIGHT A SIGNAL FIRE TO ATTRACT JERRY'S ATTENTION. THEY MUST BE ALL ROUND US, AND THEY'D TAKE CARE OF THE WOUND, AT LEAST. *BUT ONE OF US WILL HAVE TO STAY WITH FLEMING TO KEEP THE SIGNAL FIRE GOING!*

I'LL STAY, SARGE! FLEMING'S MY FRIEND.



WE CAN'T DESERT FLEMING LIKE THAT! *WE MUST ALL STAY!*

EASTMAN'S PROTEST BROUGHT NAKED ANGER BLAZING INTO CALVERT'S EYES ...

NO ONE'S DOING ANY DESERTING, EASTMAN. IT WILL NEED ONLY ONE MAN TO KEEP THE FIRE GOING AND LOOK AFTER FLEMING UNTIL THE GERMANS COME. THE REST OF US WOULD BE GIVING OURSELVES UP NEEDLESSLY.

YEAH! WE CAN LEAVE PLENTY OF FOOD AND WATER BEHIND!

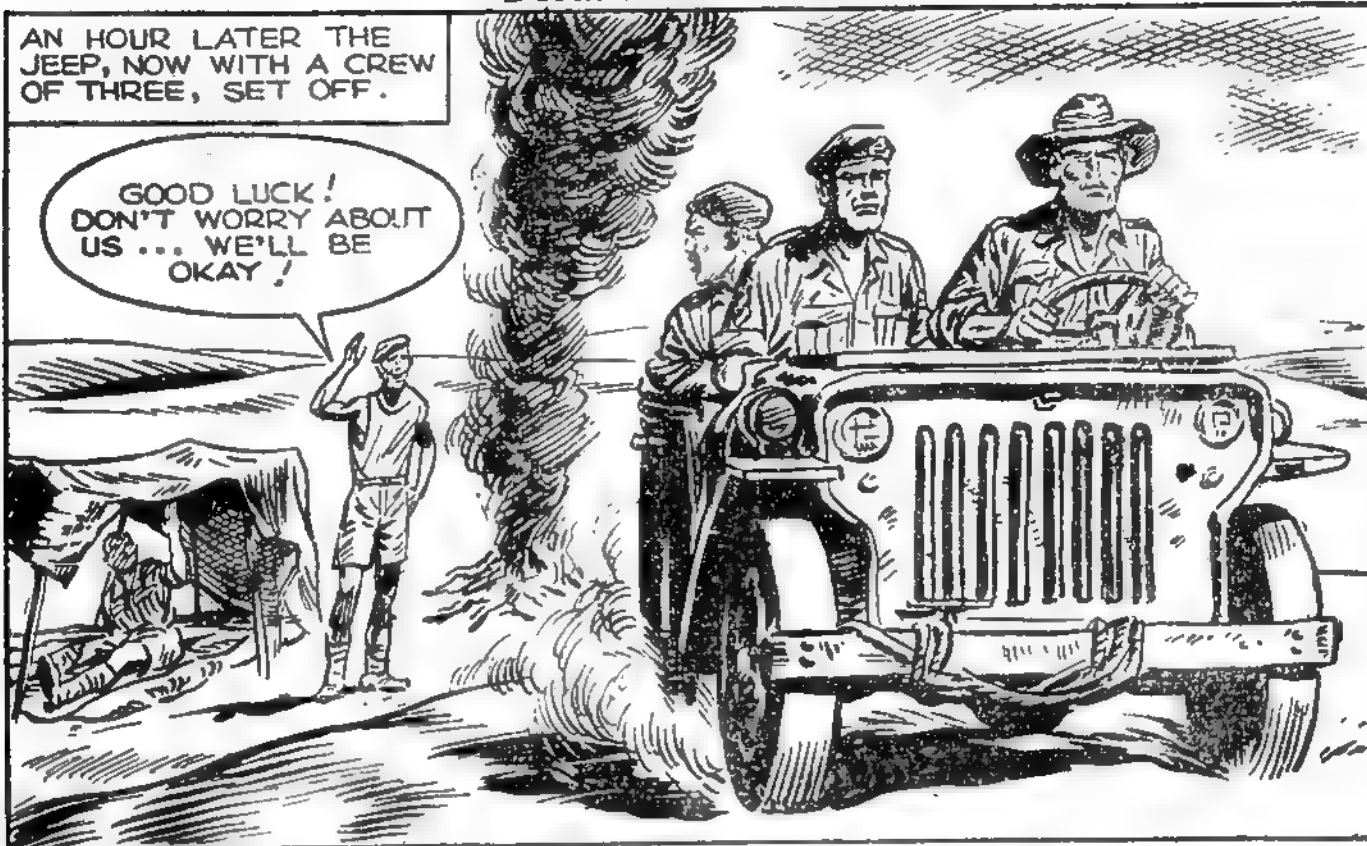
SARGE IS RIGHT, EASTMAN-- YOU THREE MUST GO ON.



Destination Alamein

AN HOUR LATER THE JEEP, NOW WITH A CREW OF THREE, SET OFF.

GOOD LUCK!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT
US ... WE'LL BE
OKAY!



BY THE NEXT DAY, THE THREE MEN WERE ENTERING THE "GREAT SAND SEA", A PITILESS, UNINHABITED WASTE STRETCHING FOR NEARLY A THOUSAND MILES ALONG THE SOUTHERN REACHES OF EGYPT AND LIBYA ...

IT'S SLOWING US UP
DRIVING THROUGH ALL THIS
LOOSE SAND. BUT AT LEAST
WE STAND LESS CHANCE OF
COMING ACROSS JERRY
IN THESE PARTS.

WE'LL HAVE TO
STOP SOON AND
COOL OFF THE
ENGINE!





A FEW MILES ON, THE DESERT DIPPED DOWN TO A FLAT, ROCK PLAIN...STREWN WITH THE WRECKAGE OF A BOMBED CONVOY...



Destination Alamein

BLUEY CLIMBED INTO THE BACK OF A BULLET-RIDDLED TRUCK AND GAVE A TRIUMPHANT YELL ...

WE HIT THE JACKPOT, MATES. THIS MUST HAVE BEEN A WATER SUPPLY TRUCK. THERE'S A WHOLE STACK OF JERRICANS HERE!

THANK HEAVEN FOR THAT! NOW WE CAN HAVE A GOOD SWIG EACH. MY THROAT'S BURNING!



BUT EVEN AS JACK CALVERT WAS RAISING HIS MUG TO HIS LIPS, HIS EYES CAUGHT THE DISTANT FLASH OF SUN ON METAL ...

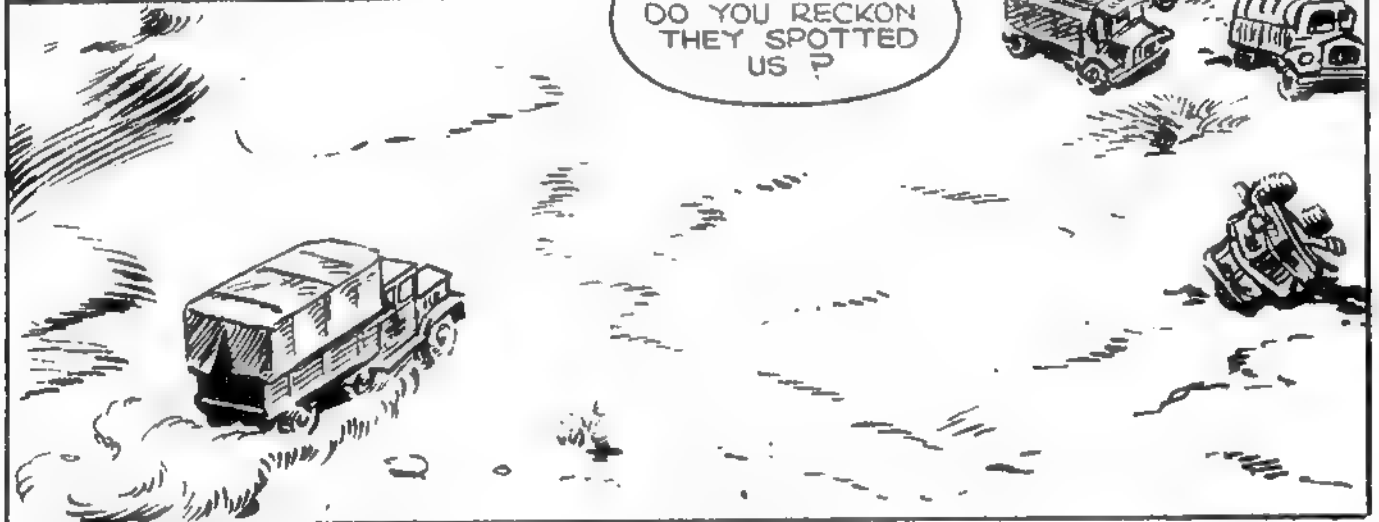
I SURE NEEDED THAT! HEY, DRINK UP, SARGE!

THERE'S SOMETHING MOVING THIS WAY! WE'D BETTER DRIVE THE JEEP IN AMONG THESE TRUCKS, THEN SEE IF THERE ARE SOME GUNS AND AMMUNITION LEFT AROUND. I THINK WE MAY NEED THEM!



LUCK WAS STILL WITH THEM, FOR A HURRIED SEARCH UNEARTHED A GOOD SUPPLY OF LEE-ENFIELD RIFLES AND AMMUNITION. THEN THEY CRAWLED OUT OF SIGHT AS A LORRY GROUND ITS WAY ACROSS THE PLAIN TOWARDS THEM ...

IT'S A JERRY!
DO YOU RECKON
THEY SPOTTED
US ?



THE ENEMY TRUCK PULLED TO A HALT LESS THAN A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY. AS TWO GERMANS LEAPT FROM THE CAB, JACK WHISPERED URGENTLY TO HIS TWO COMPANIONS.

FOR PETE'S SAKE HOLD
YOUR FIRE! THERE MAY
BE MORE OF THEM IN
THE BACK OF THAT
TRUCK!



Destination Alamein

HE WAS RIGHT ...

WE STOP HERE LONG
ENOUGH TO MAKE SOME
COFFEE ... BUT HURRY!



LUCKY WE DIDN'T
TAKE A POT SHOT AT
THOSE FIRST TWO! WE'D
REALLY BE IN TROUBLE
IF WE HAD!



THEN THEY TENSED AS ONE OF THE GERMANS FINISHED HIS COFFEE AND SAUNTERED IN THEIR DIRECTION ...



BUT AS THE ENEMY SOLDIER CAME NEARER, EASTMAN'S NERVES STRETCHED TO BREAKING POINT. SUDDENLY, WITH A HOARSE CRY, HE FIRED ...



Destination Alamein

FOR A SPLIT SECOND, THE STARTLED
GERMANS GAPED ... THEN ...

ACHTUNG!
TAKE COVER AND
OPEN FIRE AT
THAT LORRY!



POUR
IT INTO
THEM!

BUT IT DID NOT TAKE THE GERMAN MAJOR LONG TO REALISE THAT HIS MEN GREATLY OUTNUMBERED HIS OPPONENTS ...

THERE ARE ONLY A FEW OF THEM. TAKE SOME MEN AND ESTABLISH A POSITION TO THE REAR. WE'LL GIVE YOU COVERING FIRE WITH THE SPANDAU!



A HAMMERING BURST OF MACHINE-GUN FIRE CAUSED THE THREE BRITISHERS TO DUCK HURRIEDLY. BUT JACK CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE FIVE GERMANS RUNNING TO OUTFLANK THEM ...

THAT DOES IT! THEY'VE GOT A SPANDAU! WE CAN'T LICK THEM NOW!



A HAIL OF BULLETS RIPPED THE AIR ABOUT THE THREE MEN AS THEY MADE A MAD DASH FOR THE JEEP....



LUCKILY, NO GERMAN BULLET HAD STRUCK A VITAL PART OF THE ENGINE. WITHIN SECONDS, BLUEY GOT THE JEEP UNDER WAY...



VERY SOON, THE JEEP WAS OUT OF RANGE OF THE GERMANS.

I... I'M SORRY!
THAT WAS ALL
MY FAULT!

PHEW! THAT
WAS A HOT ONE,
SARGE!

TOO HOT FOR
ME, BLUEY. DON'T
SLACKEN SPEED
THOUGH. THOSE JERRIES
BACK THERE MAY HAVE
A RADIO IN THAT
TRUCK. WE DON'T
WANT ANY MORE
BRUSHES WITH THE
LUFTWAFFE!

THAT NIGHT, ONCE MORE SURROUNDED BY THE SHIFTING SAND DUNES, THEY CALLED A HALT ...

THANKS TO THOSE JERRIES, WE
WEREN'T ABLE TO GET ANY MORE
WATER, AND WHAT WE HAVE LEFT
WILL BE NEEDED TO KEEP THE JEEP
GOING. WE'LL DO AS EASTMAN
SUGGESTED... TRAVEL BY NIGHT
AND HOLE UP IN DAYLIGHT!

IN THIS KIND OF
COUNTRY, IT'S GOING
TO BE PRETTY RUGGED
DRIVING BY NIGHT. BUT
I GUESS WE'VE NO
CHOICE.



Destination Alamein

AFTER A SHORT BREAK, THEY WERE ONCE MORE ON THE MOVE. EASTMAN WAS GIVING BLUEY A REST FROM DRIVING.

KEEP DRIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE DUNES, MATE. OTHERWISE THE LOOSE SAND JUST DRIFTS AWAY FROM UNDER THE WHEELS.

ALL RIGHT, BLUEY! JUST SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE RIDE!



BUT EASTMAN DID NOT HAVE BLUEY'S EXPERIENCE OF DESERT DRIVING. SUDDENLY HIS FRONT WHEELS HIT A HALF-BURIED BOULDER, AND THE JEEP SWUNG VIOLENTLY TO ONE SIDE

TURN THE WHEEL! DRIVE HER DOWN THE DUNE! DON'T LET HER TOPPLE!

SHE'S SLIPPING! THE SAND'S GIVING WAY!



BUT BLUEY'S WARNING CAME
A SPLIT-SECOND TOO LATE...





BUT ANNABELLE HAD TRAVELLED HER LAST MILE ...

AND, AT A ROUGH GUESS, WE'RE STILL SOME THREE HUNDRED MILES FROM FARAFRA!

THE OLD GIRL'S HAD IT! PROP-SHAFT'S SNAPPED CLEAN THROUGH! FROM NOW ON IT'S SHANK'S PONY FOR US!



BUT THEIR FLIGHT WAS EVEN WORSE THAN THEY FIRST REALISED ...

I HAD THE COMPASS HOOKED ON TO THE DASHBOARD, BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF IT NOW. WE'LL NEVER FIND IT IN THIS SAND!

THE JERRICAN'S HAD A HOLE KNOCKED IN IT. OUR WATER'S ALL GONE!

NO WATER!
NO COMPASS!
WE CAN'T
MAKE IT NOW!

DISPIRITEDLY, THE THREE MEN TOOK STOCK OF THE GRIM SITUATION ...

WE'VE SALVAGED WHAT LITTLE WATER THERE WAS IN THE JEEP'S RADIATOR. BUT THAT WASN'T MORE THAN A COUPLE OF DROPS. OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO DO WHAT FLEMING AND HARRIS DID! LIGHT A SMOKE-FIRE WHEN IT'S DAYLIGHT AND HOPE THAT **SOMEBODY COMES!** MAYBE THOSE JERRIES WE RAN INTO YESTERDAY WILL HAVE THE LUFTWAFFE OUT LOOKING FOR US!

IT'S THE ONLY THING I GUESS, SARGE. BUT I SURE HATE TO DO IT!

NEXT DAY, THEY SET FIRE TO THE JEEP, AND AS THE LONG BLACK COLUMN OF SMOKE DRIFTED HIGH INTO THE CLEAR SKY, CALVERT TURNED AWAY TO HIDE HIS EMOTIONS FROM BLUEY AND EASTMAN:



IT WAS THEN THAT EASTMAN REALISED HOW WRONG HE HAD BEEN ABOUT HIS SERGEANT. BUT BEFORE HE COULD VOICE THIS TO BLUEY, THERE CAME A SHOUT FROM CALVERT.



GRADUALLY, THE DUST CLOUD WAS REVEALED AS A LONG LINE OF VEHICLES MAKING STRAIGHT TOWARDS THEM. AS THEY DREW NEARER, BLUEY GAVE A GASP OF SURPRISE!

SAY... WAIT A MINUTE! THOSE ARE JEEPS! THEY'RE NOT GERMAN VEHICLES!

DON'T RAISE YOUR HOPES, BLUEY. THEY MAY HAVE BEEN CAPTURED FROM OUR BOYS!



BUT THERE WAS NOTHING GERMAN ABOUT THE VOICE THAT GREETED THEM FROM THE LEADING JEEP.

THEY ARE BRITISH!

COME ON, MATES! OR DO YOU EXPECT US TO CLIMB THAT FLIPPING DUNE AND FETCH YOU?



LONG RANGE DESERT BOYS!

Chapter 3. THE RAID

THEY WERE TAKEN AT ONCE TO THE COLUMN'S COMMAND TRUCK...

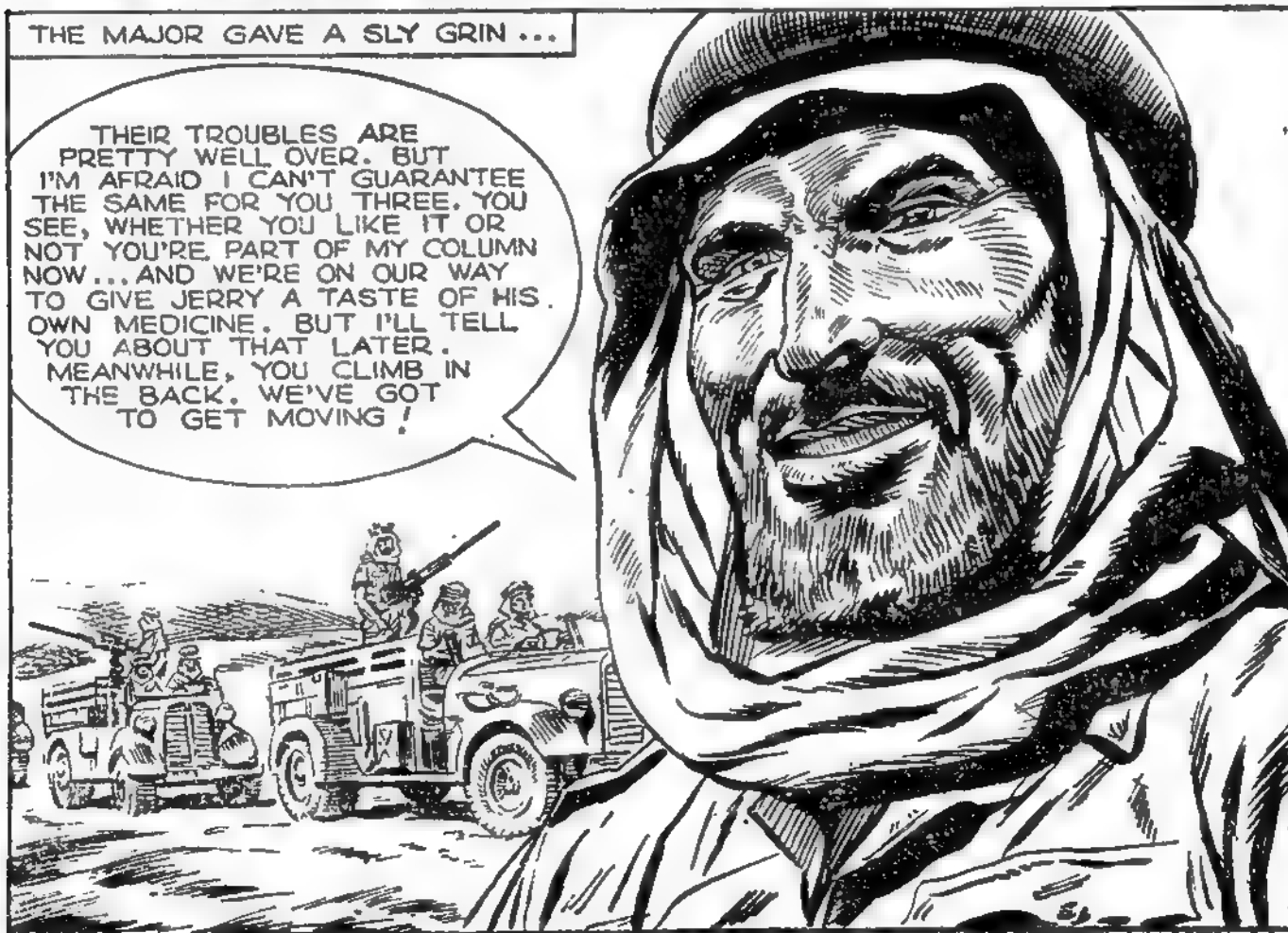
I THINK I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. ONE OF OUR PATROLS RETURNING FROM THE INTERIOR PICKED UP TWO OF YOUR PALS. FLEMING AND HARRIS, I BELIEVE THEIR NAMES WERE.

THAT'S WONDERFUL NEWS! WE THOUGHT THEY'D BE IN GERMAN HANDS!



THE MAJOR GAVE A SLY GRIN ...

THEIR TROUBLES ARE PRETTY WELL OVER. BUT I'M AFRAID I CAN'T GUARANTEE THE SAME FOR YOU THREE. YOU SEE, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT YOU'RE PART OF MY COLUMN NOW... AND WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO GIVE JERRY A TASTE OF HIS OWN MEDICINE. BUT I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT THAT LATER. MEANWHILE, YOU CLIMB IN THE BACK. WE'VE GOT TO GET MOVING!



WHILE THE COLUMN CONTINUED, CALVERT, EASTMAN AND BLUEY SLEPT, THEIR TAUTENED NERVES RELAXED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT -- FOR THE TIME BEING ANYWAY -- THEY WERE OUT OF DANGER! HOURS LATER, THEY AWOKE TO FIND THE COLUMN HAD STOPPED FOR THE NIGHT ...



A FEW MINUTES LATER, RESTED AND REFRESHED, THEY FACED MAJOR CAMERON.

WE ARE A COLUMN OF SOME FORTY MEN, MEMBERS OF THE L.R.D.G. AND A COMMANDO UNIT. OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO DESTROY A GERMAN-HELD AMMUNITION DUMP, AND AT THE SAME TIME DO A DECOY RAID ON A NEARBY AIRFIELD.



Destination Alamein



TWO DAYS PASSED, AND THE COLUMN MOVED INTO HILLY COUNTRY, COMPARATIVELY THICK WITH VEGETATION. AT NIGHT IT PULLED INTO LEAGUER CLOSE AGAINST THE SHELTERING SIDE OF A HUGE GRANITE BLUFF. *IT WAS THE EVE OF THE RAID...*



MAJOR CAMERON INTRODUCED CALVERT AND EASTMAN TO ANOTHER OFFICER...

THIS IS CAPTAIN BROWN, AN EXPLOSIVES EXPERT. I'VE DECIDED YOU SHOULD HELP HIM AT THE AMMO DUMP. YOUR AUSTRALIAN FRIEND WILL REPLACE ONE OF MY JEEP DRIVERS WHO HAS BEEN UNLUCKY ENOUGH TO FALL SICK. CAPTAIN BROWN WILL GIVE YOU THE DRILL!



IT'S A PIECE OF CAKE REALLY! ONE OF YOU WILL GIVE ME A HAND LAYING THE CHARGES, AND THE OTHER WILL KEEP WATCH FOR ENEMY SENTRIES. I DON'T ANTICIPATE MUCH TROUBLE OUR END. JERRY WILL BE FULLY OCCUPIED TRYING TO COPE WITH OUR LADS AT THE AIRFIELD. I'LL SHOW YOU THE LAYOUT OF THE DUMP, BEFORE WE MOVE OFF!



JUST BEFORE DAWN, TWO ARABS SLIPPED IN FROM THE DESERT AND SPOKE AT GREAT LENGTH TO MAJOR CAMERON.

WHO ARE THOSE BLOKES?

COUPLE OF OUR AGENTS, MOST LIKELY. LOTS OF ARABS HELP AS GUIDES AND SCOUTS. THOSE TWO HAVE PROBABLY GIVEN THE OBJECTIVE THE ONCE-OVER.



Destination Alamein

WHATEVER THE ARABS HAD TO REPORT MUST HAVE BEEN SATISFACTORY. WITHIN HALF AN HOUR THE ATTACK COLUMN MOVED OFF.

SO-LONG, MATES!
AND GOOD LUCK! SEE
YOU BACK HERE ...
LATER!



A FEW MILES ON, THE RAIDERS STOPPED JUST BELOW THE CREST OF A HILL OVERLOOKING THE GERMAN AIRFIELD.

WE'RE GOING IN NOW. AS PLANNED,
YOU THREE WAIT UNTIL THE FIRING STARTS,
THEN HEAD FOR THE DUMP. WE PROMISE TO
KEEP JERRY'S ATTENTION FOCUSED ON US.
THEN WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED LAYING YOUR
CHARGES, SEND UP A FLARE!



LEAVE IT
TO US, SIR!

AS THE COLUMN PASSED BY THE JEEP WITH THE EXPLOSIVES, BLUEY GAVE HIS TWO PALS A BROAD GRIN.



SO-LONG, COBBERS!
SEE YOU WHEN THE
FUN'S OVER!

YOUR AUSSIE PAL
SEEMS TICKLED
PINK AT THE
PROSPECT OF
ACTION!

THE COLUMN DISAPPEARED
FROM SIGHT, AND THE
MEN WAITED TENSELY FOR
THE SOUND OF FIRING ...



WOULDN'T
WE ALL STAND
A BETTER CHANCE
IF WE ATTACKED
BY NIGHT?

WE MIGHT! BUT THE
OTHERS ARE CARRYING
INCENDIARY BULLETS TO SET
LIGHT TO THE AIRCRAFT. BY
NIGHT THEY'D BE OUTLINED
AGAINST THE FLAMES,
WHILST JERRY WOULD
HAVE THE COVER OF
DARKNESS!

SUDDENLY, THE SILENCE OF THE DESERT WAS SHATTERED BY A HAIL OF FIRING FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE AIRFIELD. IN THE SAME INSTANT EASTMAN HURTTLED THE JEEP FORWARD.

SWING RIGHT WHEN WE ARE NEAR THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL. WE DAREN'T RISK BEING SPOTTED!



AS THE JEEP BUMPED AND SWAYED THROUGH CONCEALING DESERT SCRUB, THE MEN COULD SEE COLUMNS OF BLACK SMOKE RISING FROM THE NEARBY AIRFIELD, AND HEAR THE DIN OF THE RAGING BATTLE.

THE DUMP'S STRAIGHT AHEAD! BUT STOP AT THE EDGE OF THIS SCRUB SO THAT THE JEEP WON'T BE SEEN.



MINUTES LATER, THEY WERE RUNNING TOWARDS THE ENEMY DUMP, EACH CARRYING A BOX OF EXPLOSIVES.



CAPTAIN BROWN LOST NO TIME IN CUTTING A WAY THROUGH THE BARBED WIRE SURROUNDING THE DUMP.



Destination Alamein.

MEANWHILE, THE RAIDERS WERE WREAKING
TERRIBLE HAVOC AT THE AIRFIELD.



BUT THE GERMANS WERE RECOVERING FROM THE SURPRISE OF THE ATTACK.



NOW THE ENEMY BEGAN TO HIT BACK -- HARD! THE SHRILL CHATTERING OF SPANDAUS MINGLED WITH THE CLAMOUR OF BROWNING MACHINE-GUNS AND THE DEEP CRUMP OF GRENADES. A JEEP, CAUGHT IN A HISSING SCYTHE OF TRACER, SWUNG AND OVERTURNED ...



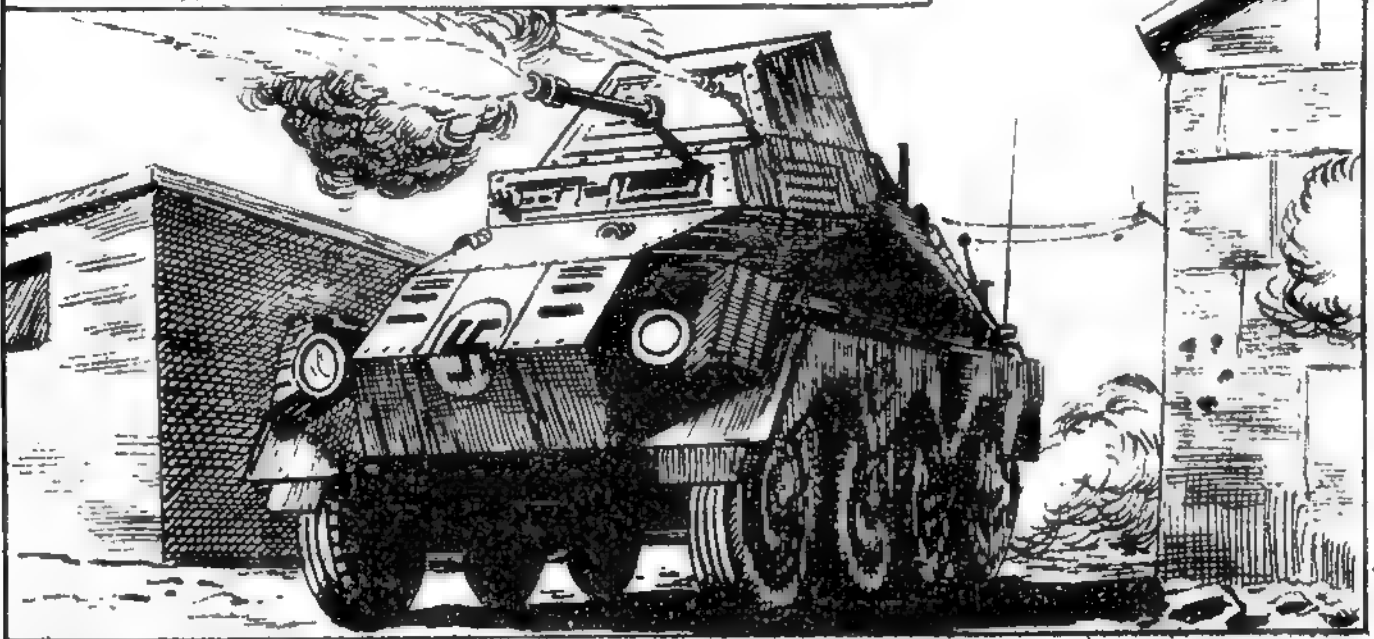
A GERMAN MACHINE-GUN
FELL VICTIM TO MAJOR
CAMERON'S BREN ...



BUT THE MAJOR KNEW
THAT FROM NOW ON
THEY WOULD BE FIGHTING
A LOSING BATTLE.



LOOKING FOR ALL THE WORLD LIKE SOME MENACING, PRIMEVAL MONSTER, A GERMAN ARMoured CAR ROLLED UP TO THE EDGE OF THE AIRSTRIP, ITS GUN TURRET SPITTING FLAME.



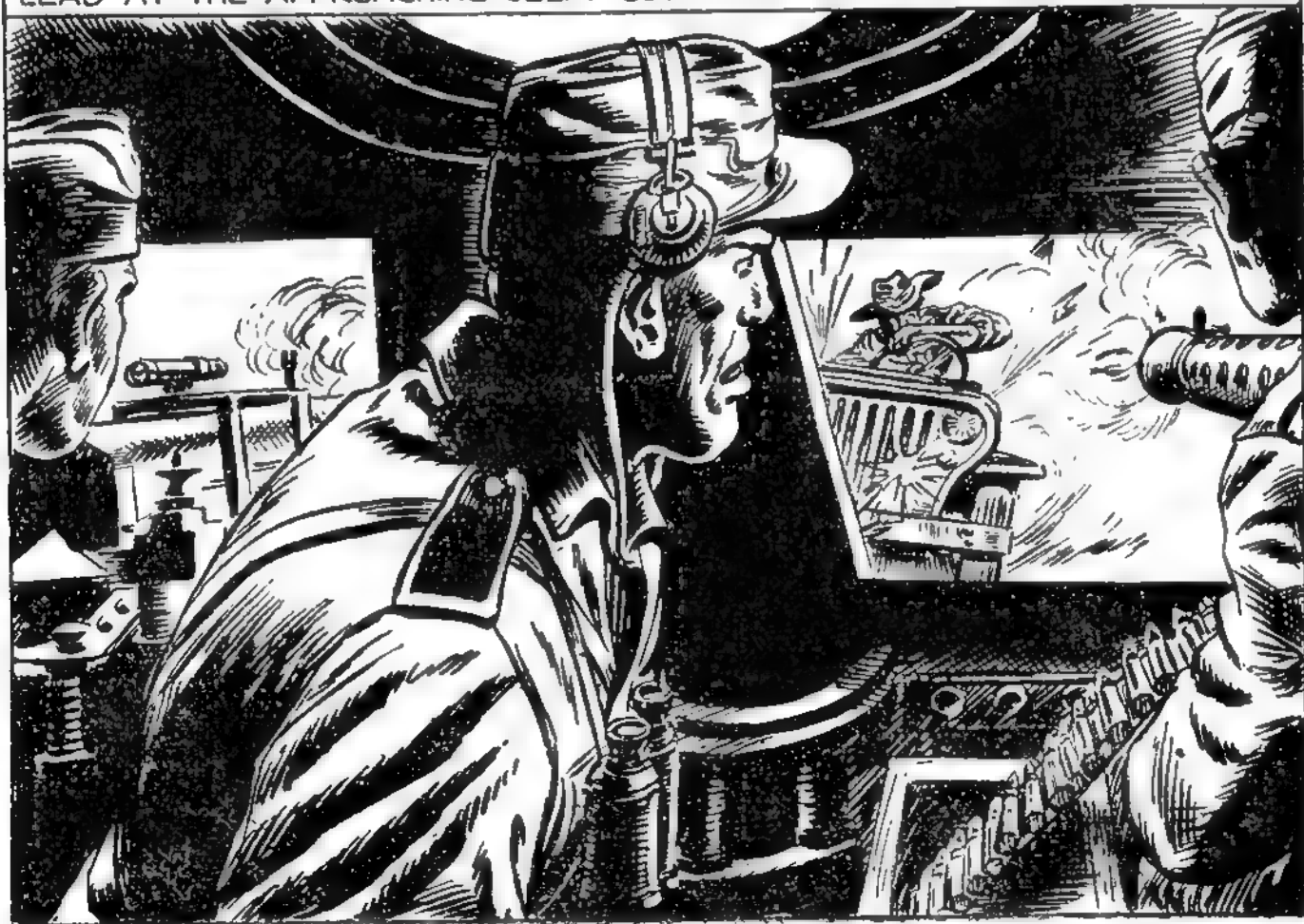
ARMED ONLY WITH MACHINE-GUNS, THE RAIDERS WERE COMPLETELY AT THE MERCY OF THIS NEW AND TERRIBLE ENEMY. BUT BLUEY NORTH SEIZED ON A DARING PLAN!



BLUEY GUNNED HIS JEEP FORWARD ...
STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE ARMoured CAR!



THE TURRET OF THE ARMoured CAR WHIPPED ROUND TO HOSE A STREAM OF
LEAD AT THE APPROACHING JEEP. BUT BLUEY KEPT ON COMING ...



THEN



EVEN AS BLUEY HIT THE GROUND, HE HURLED HIS GRENADE AT THE JEEP FLATTENED AGAINST THE FRONT OF THE ARMOURD CAR!



AS THE GRENADE EXPLODED UNDER THE SHATTERED FUEL TANK, THE JEEP BURST INTO FLAMES. HASTILY THE ARMOURD CAR TRIED TO BACK AWAY... BUT THE TWO VEHICLES WERE FIRMLY ENTANGLED.



THE ARMoured CAR WAS OUT OF THE FIGHT. BUT AS BLUEY RAN BACK HE BECAME A TARGET FOR A CONCENTRATION OF SPANDAU FIRE.



BACK AT THE AMMUNITION DUMP, CALVERT FROZE SUDDENLY AS A GERMAN APPEARED.



BUT CALVERT SAW THE GERMAN HALT AND GAZE AT THE SEVERED WIRE. HE RUSHED FORWARD AND THE SENTRY TURNED ...



CALVERT'S TOMMY-GUN LASHED THE SENTRY'S RIFLE TO ONE SIDE ... AND HIS FIST SWUNG IN A LIGHTNING UPPERCUT!



THE SINGLE SHOT REACHED THE EARS OF THE GERMANS WHO WERE IN THE GUARD HOUSE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DUMP.

STEINER MUST BE IN TROUBLE...
COME ON!



GET OUT AND
MAKE FOR THE
JEEP! I'LL COVER
YOU!

COMING!
WE'VE LAID
THE CHARGES!

THERE
HE IS!



AS CAPTAIN BROWN AND EASTMAN RAN TOWARDS THE JEEP, CALVERT'S TOMMY-GUN HAMMERED AT THE ADVANCING GERMANS!

COME ON, CALVERT!
COME ON!



FIRING A LONG, FINAL BURST AT THE ENEMY, CALVERT STARTED TO RUN. THEN...

AAGH...
MY LEGS!



AND AT THAT MOMENT EASTMAN GLANCED BACK OVER HIS SHOULDER

CALVERT'S
HIT!



WITHOUT HESITATION, EASTMAN TURNED AND BEGAN TO RACE BACK...



WHY DID YOU COME BACK FOR ME? YOU COULD HAVE GOT CLEAN AWAY!



BUT BY NOW CAPTAIN BROWN HAD REACHED THE JEEP...AND THE BROWNING MACHINE-GUN!



OUR M.O. WILL SOON GET THAT LEG FIXED UP, SERGEANT. NOW, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!



AS THEY STARTED BACK, CAPTAIN BROWN FIRED A SIGNAL FLARE.

THOSE CHAPS WILL CERTAINLY BE GLAD TO SEE OUR SIGNAL. IT LOOKS LIKE THEY HAD IT PRETTY TOUGH!

I WONDER IF BLUEY'S ALL RIGHT?



BACK AT THE RENDEZVOUS, CALVERT'S LEG WAS QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY DRESSED. THEN EVERYONE WAITED TENSELY FOR THE RETURN OF THE RAIDING PARTY. AT LAST THEY HEARD THE WELCOME SOUND OF JEEP ENGINES ...

HERE THEY COME!



THE RAIDERS WERE BATTLE-GRIMED AND WEARY, BUT ON EVERY FACE THERE WAS GRIM SATISFACTION.

IT TURNED OUT A TOUGHER PROPOSITION THAN WE THOUGHT. WE LOST SEVERAL OF OUR LADS, I'M AFRAID. HOW DID YOUR PART OF THE BUSINESS GO?

WE RAN INTO TROUBLE, TOO! BUT WE LAID THE CHARGES!



CALVERT AND EASTMAN FOUND BLUEY AS CHEERFUL AND FULL OF SPIRIT AS EVER.

STOPPED A BULLET IN MY SHOULDER, BUT IT TAKES MORE THAN THAT TO GET AN AUSSIE DOWN!



Destination Alamein



THEN THE SOUND OF ENGINES STARTING UP WAS DROWNED BY THE ROAR OF AN EARTH-SHAKING EXPLOSION.



TWO MONTHS LATER, FIVE MEN SHARED A WELL-EARNED LEAVE IN ALEXANDRIA.

WE CERTAINLY THOUGHT WE'D SEEN THE LAST OF YOU, THAT DAY AFTER THE SANDSTORM.

IT JUST GOES TO SHOW YOU, MATES! THE ARMY'S A SMALL WORLD -- YOU NEVER CAN TELL WHEN, OR WHERE, YOU'LL MEET UP WITH YOUR PALS!



Destination Alamein

...BLUEY WAS RIGHT! IN OCTOBER 1942, THE EIGHTH ARMY HURLED ROMMEL'S AFRIKA KORPS BACK FROM EL ALAMEIN... AND A CRUISER TANK ROARED PAST A PLATOON OF AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY!

HEY, THERE, BLUEY... DOING IT THE HARD WAY?

SEE YOU IN BERLIN, COBBERS!



Printed in England by Messrs. Percy Brothers Ltd., Manchester 1, and published each month by Fleetway Publications Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: Tallis House, Tallis Street, London, E.C.4. Sole Agents: Australasia, Messrs. Gordon & Gotch Ltd.; South Africa, Central News Agency Ltd.; Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Messrs. Kingstons Ltd. WAR PICTURE LIBRARY is sold subject to the following conditions, that it shall not, without the written consent of the Publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition, or in any unauthorised cover by way of Trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

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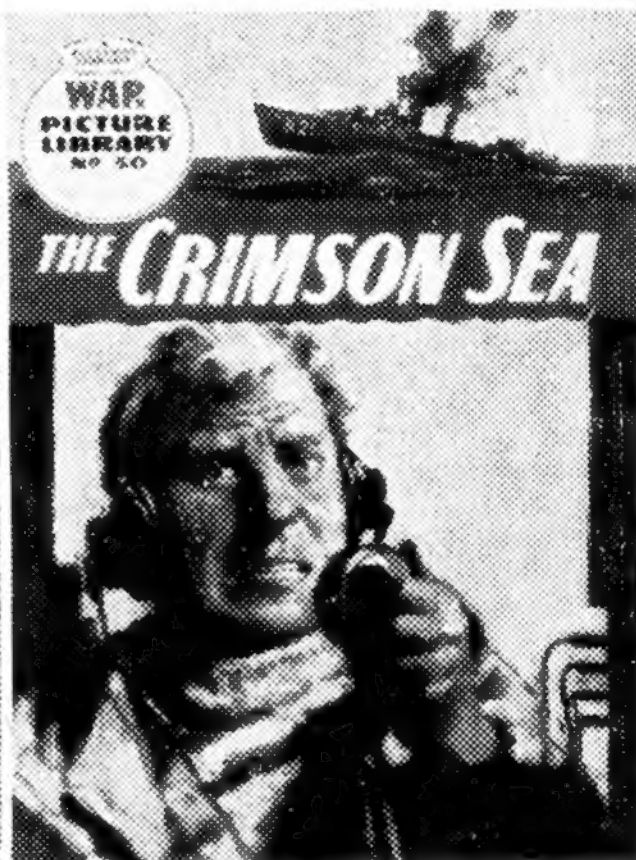
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